The Unitarian Christian

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EDITORIAL

THE Fourth Biennial Conference of the Unitarian and Universalist Churches in Syracuse, New York is now history. The purpose of the Syracuse meeting was to act on the report and recommendations of the Joint Merger Commission and to create a proposed Constitution and By-Laws for the anticipated consolidation of the American Unitarian Association and the Universalist Church of America. The temper of the Syracuse Conference was strongly pro-merger, so much so that it seemed to many people that the chief item on the agenda was a vote of confidence in the Commission. Those who deeply cared about merger were present and prepared to see that the next step on that road was taken. This was true, if reports are accurate, of the Universalists who were meeting concurrently. When the majority of two bodies of delegates are committed to accomplishing one thing they are prepared to make concessions—to give and take—to compromise something so that in the end they may stand side by side.

The question that immediately confronts us is this: "Does the union to be accomplished recommend itself as worth more than the losses it demands?" That, I believe, was the question we should have asked last winter and spring as we prepared to vote on merger. There will be other difficult questions we shall have to face in the next two years before the final acceptance or rejection of merger is accomplished.

In order to understand Syracuse we must recall a few facts about Unitarianism in the past and at the present moment. The statistics of growth in the past decade are striking. From 1948 to 1958 our adult membership shows an increase of 56 per cent—we have grown from 74,000 to 112,000. Our church schools reflect a growth of 154 per cent in the past ten years. Our enrollment of 23,000 children has grown to 59,000. The 354 churches in 1948 have become 384 churches and 258 fellowships. We were told in Syracuse that in less than five years there will be 1,000 churches and fellowships, 175,000 adult members and 90,000 children in our church schools. No church, and especially no small church, can experience such growth as we have seen in this decade without the discomfort of growing pains.

What is the nature of this growth? We are told that Unitarianism attracts those who deliberately or by default have rejected the conventional churches. In Unitarianism they have found *freedom*, for whether we like it or not that is the only gospel we seem to have. With a hostility toward, or lack of interest in, characteristic Christian doctrines, the Christian orientation has not been as strong among newer churches as among the older churches of the New England order.

On the other side were the Universalists. Without the complications of new growth such as the Unitarians have experienced the past decade has been a time for *internal* change. Universal salvation as a distinctive doctrine has given way to the idea that there are *universals in religion.* Many modern Universalists would go further and say that the task of Universalism is to build a universal religion based upon the common elements of Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Christainity, and all the others.

Against this very sketchy and inadequate background we must see Syracuse for the discussion over the purposes of the proposed Association reflected the meeting of two elements in both churches: the Christian and the universal. In other words, the Syracuse controversy was carried on by those who wish or are in conscience bound to emphasize our Christian heritage and those who desire to make an appeal to non-christians to join with us in the common cause of liberal religion.

Probably no Unitarian Christian would make

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The Church Outside The Church

Herbert F. Vetter, Jr.

Just before I talked with him, a provocative young professor who considers himself to be an atheist had been reading Thomas Merton's *The Seven Storey Mountain.* This assignment, an unpleasant discipline for this particular professor, was undertaken as a means of gaining insight into the life of a contemporary man who swung from a Communist orientation to a Roman Catholic orientation, in fact of course, to life in a Trappist monastery.

Why was this autobiography so nauseous to this intellectual, a person who has been outstanding both for his active defense of American civil liberties and for sacrificial participation in the American labor movement? Primary causes of distaste were Merton's naivete and his ready surrender of independent judgment. To the professor, this autobiographer's solution to major problems were and are incredibly simple. In his earlier phase when a young Communist, he regarded capitalism as the cause of every ill; therefore, capitalism must be overthrown, replaced temporarily by the dictatorship of the proletariat, and then be followed by the ultimate bliss of the classless society where there will be no state, no greed, no unhappiness. Now Merton, as a Catholic, repeatedly states that the supernatural Church is the only true guide and heaven the reward. For Father Merton, in the Roman Catholic Church alone there is solace. How clear the doctrine is, and how magnificently it is supported by the force of Scripture and through centuries of a unified and continuous and consistent tradition. Only through supernatural revelation and divine miracles can one rightly understand. As the ego is surrendered, as one is obedient, superlative joy is known and, at last, there is relief from the troubles and worries of life in the world. Thus it is Merton's servility to the church which irritates this freedom-conscious social scientist. Particularly disgusting to him are the lines in which Thomas Merton indicates that there is something eminently satisfying in the thought that all Roman Catholics know exactly what they believe, and know what to teach, and all teach the same thing, and teach it with coordination and purpose and great effect.

If this is what religion is, the skeptic might well say, then Marx and Freud are right: religion *is* opiate and neurosis. In such a situation Protestants will very likely find themselves in substantial agreement with the skeptic. He is our ally in the struggle against theological magic and ecclesiastical absolutism. Moreover, the skeptic often makes excellent criticisms of our own religious ideas and practices.

The severest critics of organized religion can perform an indispensable service because persons within the church all too often fail to see the social and cultural consequences of their faith. Those who are on the "inside" automatically associate church activities with that which is holy, that which is uniquely precious. Thus corporate interest may mask such features as the class bias of certain religious concerns, the use of the church as a vehicle for upward social mobility and for the unconscious or conscious quest for non-communal personal power. Such motivating factors protrude so that worthy skeptical observers may discern the pretensions of the faithful and, therefore, scorn "the holy" as a perversity to be avoided or opposed.

Let us not be unduly hasty in our condemnation of the self-styled atheist or agnostic, for in these ranks stand many authentic saints—not "abortive saints," as Jacques Maritain would say, but authentic saints, skeptic saints—men who are truly committed to God even though they choose not to use His name. God speaks not only through those who affirm His existence but also through those who theoretically deny Him. To reverse an old distinction we may speak not only of the *ekklesiola in ekklesia,* the little church within the church, but also of *ekklesia extra ekklesiam,* the church outside the church. A high percentage of the persons who are most actively and responsibly laboring for social justice and international peace are still outside the ranks of organized religion, but they are none the less members of the invisible church, the open fellowship of authentic religious search and commitment. Ignazio Silone put the insight criptically: *They who have gone out of the temple none the less carry within themselves the truth of Christ.*

In this church outside the church may be found the skeptics who launch attack after attack against the forces which would tame the world with monotonous and stifling uniformity, who courageously defend the right of the individual

to think freely in every field of inquiry, who unseat the mighty who rule without consent or without allowing civil freedoms, who reject a sad-faced, world-withdrawing piety and find humor and vitality consistent with the highest good. Those who are skeptical of the popular gods or prevalent religious practices are part of the vanguard of opposition to the evils of our time, refusing to bend the knee before the idols of rigid ecclesiasticism, militant nationalism, human pretentiousness, dogmatic finality, and illusory supernaturalism.

Moreover, the history of the modern mind is in large measure a history of skepticism. Philosophy has assumed the role of rebel in its reaction against domination by the medieval queen of the sciences, revealed theology. Through gaining its autonomy philosophy has made vigorously critical and constructive strides through such doubters as Bacon and Descartes, Spinoza and Hume, Locke and Mill, James and Dewey.

Modern man's insistence upon the autonomy of the natural and social sciences has likewise immeasurably promoted the advancement of knowledge, an advancement which has been won only through warfare against fortresses of faith. Galileo, Newton, Darwin, Freud: each fought intensely against strongholds of devout ignorance. Even in politics the struggle has been as much that of doubt as of faith, of unbelief as of belief. In the pageant of democracy the leaders have often been regarded as skeptics, if not infidels: Voltaire, Paine, Jefferson, Franklin, Holmes. These are leaders who have warred against idolatries which stifle the democratic spirit.

Then let us praise God for skeptics, skeptics who have rejected the flight to a security that throttles creativity, who have refused to permit divine theology to be enthroned as radically superior to the disciplines of science and philosophy, who deny that any idea, or book, or person, or state, or church is so holy, so perfect, as to be exempt from the challenge of criticism. The skeptic is a whip that stirs a complacent humanity to alert thought, consistent action, and fresh creation. No longer can bovine souls languish in an abyss of mediocrity, nor can the wielder of power pursue an unjust path without prophetic rebuke and organized opposition. Truly indeed, then, *they who have gone out of the temple carry within themselves the truth of Christ.*

Skepticism is a citadel of free community, respecting men as brothers, levelling men as sinners, rejecting inner certitude when there is no outward certainty. Let us not fear the skeptic nearly so much as the naive believer. The atheist is usually insistent upon leaving the door of free inquiry ajar, whereas the believer, in his divine certitude, too often readily slams it shut. Thus the atheist often is actually on our side, for free inquiry is indigenously Protestant in its essence, and adherence to any particular theory or article of belief is secondary at most, even though that theory or belief pertains to God Himself.

Therefore, we speak in praise of skepticism, despite the fact that skepticism is not enough. Life demands not only the defense, the citadel, which skepticism provides but, above all, high levels of creative affirmation. The citadel will serve to repel the attackers of free community, but positive motive power is requisite also. Doubt, like faith itself, is of but partial validity. Every doubt implies belief; every denial of God which is not a denial of the value of life itself is upon an affirmation of divinity. The issue is never between God or no God but rather between this God or that God; there is some ultimate object of faith and devotion, however unorthodox it may be.

Even science, which is preeminently tough-minded and tough-souled, has its affirmations. The cornerstone of modern science is compounded of both cautious skepticism and cautious faith; skepticism regarding the intrusion of the divine from a world outside space-time, but faith in the fundamental orderliness of the universe; skepticism regarding man's easy lapse into the pit of dogmatic certainty, yet faith in the possibility of man's achieving greater knowledge of actual and possible events; skepticism regarding authoritarian methods of inquiry, but faith in the free cooperative endeavors of men searching for truth and knowledge and testing their hypotheses and basic principles with reason and observation. Thus both affirmation and negation are ever present.

Viewed in this context, we might liken the function of the skeptic to the checks and balances of democratic government. The skeptic, by opposing every endeavor directed toward clutching the divine in a book, person, or institution, forces a partition of powers, not allowing any group to become so powerful that it can crush those persons who disagree. No claim of infallibility rides unchecked, and no monopolization of power by the God-hoarders is likely

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The New Unitarianism and Traditional Christianity

Elmo A. Robinson

During my forty years residence in California the Unitarian movement has changed greatly in character. During the most recent decade the change has been most marked, both quantitatively and qualitatively. The growth in membership and in number of societies seems to be due in part, here as elsewhere, to a more serious look at religion by young married people, who have become increasingly aware of their parental responsibility for the religious education of their children. Formerly a Unitarian could plausibly be defined as one who believes that a Unitarian Sunday School is a good place for other people to send their children to. Now a Unitarian is frequently a person who takes an active part in a religious education program—reading, thinking, participating.

Formerly a dominant motive for Sunday School work was the perpetuation of the Church. This has been replaced by a desire to promote the religious growth of children. This in turn has led to the adoption of new methods and new curricula. Parents and teachers are sometimes still hard put specifically to define the current goals. But they have found ways of stating them. From several now forgotten sources and on my own I offer this list. The goal of religious education is to develop a capacity for the appreciation of a rich cluster of values, to promote reverence for all that is worthy of reverence, to prepare children of free minds to live in an orthodox and restrictive world. The goal is to help parents so to rear children that these children will never become delinquents, that they will never need the services of a psychiatrist, and that they will become marriagable adults, capable of establishing new family centers of the free spirit.

Similarly, changes have been going on in the adult programs of our churches and fellowships. One factor has been the rapid influx of large numbers of new members, often young, intelligent, but unfamiliar with the Unitarian background. Another is the informality of many fellowship programs. The new approaches for adults and for children have so modified the Unitarian movement, at least on the Pacific Coast, as to establish the propriety of calling it New Unitarianism. Unitarians of the older order sometimes find themselves bewildered by what is going on. They, and the newer members as well, are sometimes disturbed about the relationship between this New Unitarianism and traditional Christianity.

Any statement concerning this relationship will depend upon one's concept of what traditional Christianity is. One wide-spread view is that there was only one church until the Reformation, and that since then there have been many. The fact is that, as stated by one church historian, Latourette, "Never was there a single organization which was comprehensive of all who professed themselves Christians." There never was only one church. The early divisions are largely ignored, except by historians, but some of them were strong movements enduring several centuries. Some which antedate the Reformation are still with us. The general reader is perhaps more aware that there is a multiplicity and diversity of creeds, interpreted by an army of theologians from Clement and Augustine to Tillich. Given these divisions and these creedal and theological variations, how shall traditional Christianity be defined?

Some would assert that Christianity is to be found in an original historic kernel. Away with doctrinal differences! Away with organizational rivalries! Back to the Biblical record! There is true Christianity. But even in the New Testament there are accretions, not a part of the original. Very well, remove them! Eventually we will come to the kernel, to the simple gospel of Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth, the wise and good founder.

Others will claim, as does Santayana, that Christianity is a poetic epic. The creeds and the theologies do not state historic or scientific fact, but rather express a myth. But for adherents to this view this is not counted as a loss. For the myth is more important, more revealing, more inspiring than any narration of historic facts could be. It is perhaps some such view as this which has motivated the medical labors of Schweitzer.

Still others interpret Christianity as a spirit kept alive through the centuries. The spirit was shown in, and radiated from, the life of Jesus.

Early Christianity, a weak reed, won the competition with rival strong religions because it had something which they lacked. It had a spirit which transformed men and then radiated from them to others, producing illumined, saintly lives, some remembered, most forgotten.

Most Unitarians of the Nineteenth Century thought of themselves as part of the Christian organization, as much entitled to the name Christian as any other group. They were unwilling to part with it. True, they did not accept the creeds, partly because they did not like the idea of having any creed. Few of them would have welcomed the thesis that Christianity is pure myth, completely unhistorical. And yet an earlier English Unitarian, Milton, had expressed Christianity in epic form, and some of our own poets produced less ambitious renderings of Christianity as poetry. Parker's famous sermon on the transient and permanent asserted the idea of an historic kernel, and Emerson's equally famous address at Harvard proclaimed a spirit which might be found in unconventional sources. Both of these views were repudiated at the time, but before the century ended many Unitarians had come to accept them.

But how about those who form the New Unitarian movement of today? What is their attitude towards traditional Christianity? I distinguish four varieties of opinion, four positions taken. These I shall name and describe. In doing so, I intend to imply no value judgments, no assertion that one is better than another.

First, there are *Negative Unitarians.* These are likely to be what Universalists used to call "come-outers." They were perhaps reared by parents who were steadfastly loyal to the letter of traditional Christianity, either Catholic or Protestant. They grew up in a strict and rigid atmosphere. Or, if their present attitude is not ascribable to parents, then there were similar influences from other sources. Against these offenses our negative Unitarians react strongly. Everyone has a will to forget unpleasant associations. So these find it repulsive to be reminded of Christianity, its doctrines, its Bible, and its ceremonies. It is as if a pseudo-Freudian censor operated to shut these memories out. And sometimes there is a tendency to extend the censorship to the habits of fellow-worshippers.

Secondly, there are *Christian Unitarians.* These are likely to have been reared in a more liberally religious home. Traditional Christianity means something entirely different to them from what it does to those of the first group. They have happy memories of parental influence, of Sunday School, of church life. For them there was no stress on creed. Such are my own happy memories of the Universalist Church in Portland's Congress Square. Such memories produce a feeling of strong attachment to Christianity. Christian Unitarians occupy a position not unlike that of Parker.

My third group I call *Neo-Universalist Unitarians.* In this group are those who feel the impact of oriental philosophies and religions, and the appeal of the gospel of one world. Like Markham, they wish to draw a wider circle, which will include inspirational literature from all times and places. The best of Christianity? Yes, but only the best, and not Christianity alone. These Unitarians occupy a position not unlike that of Emerson.

Before mentioning my fourth group, I wish to comment. One is tempted to apply the Hegelian analysis here. Let Christian Unitarianism be the thesis, Negative Unitarianism the antithesis, and Neo-Universalist Unitarianism be the synthesis. But I do not wish to press this. But I would point out that in the west, in every sizable fellowship and church, all three types are to be found. One of the charms of the New Unitarian movement is its ability to bring together such divergent types, each free to express his own convictions, yet all getting along together as well as we do.

The fourth group is also widely distributed. I call these *Undetermined Unitarians.* That is, they do not know in which of the first three groups to place themselves. Perhaps some of my readers are in this fourth group. Perhaps some of you have not yet thought the problem through. But perhaps some of you who have placed yourselves in one of the first three groups have not thought the matter through either. Perhaps you have decided too quickly, too prematurely. If so, I can only remind you of our common obligation each to think for himself.

This being the case, I cannot tell you what the attitude of New Unitarians towards Christianity ought to be. I can only describe this attitude as held by one New Unitarian, namely myself. This may stimulate you to disagree, and thereby to clarify your own thinking.

I regard no creed as being a correct statement of scientific or historical fact. I would say this about various Unitarian and Universalist statements of faith, much as I like some of them. No word or form of words is factually sacred; none

is adequate to express the full content of religion.

I used to believe that Christianity was a historic kernel, corrupted by later generations. This belief has been replaced by a skepticism concerning our ability to discover or identify or precisely state what this kernel is. At best we can have but a blurred image.

Historically I regard Unitarianism (and Universalism) as forms of Christainity. Each is as rightfully a part of the Christian movement as any other denomination. There is much in Christian history that is horrible; there is much in contemporary Christianity which leaves me unresponsive or pugnacious. But then there is that in Unitarian history and current practice which I can easily criticise adversely. In fact, I have never belonged to any organization of which I wholly approve. So I find myself wavering as to whether I wish to call the New Unitarianism Christian or not. Often I incline toward an affirmative answer. But this seems unimportant. I have no missionary zeal to win others to this view.

The explanation for my inclination is found in the fact that I think of Christianity, not as doctrine or organization, but as an epic. But it is not the epic of Dante and Milton and Santayana. Perhaps I had ancestors who heard Paul speak on Mars Hill, or who took part in the disputes between Arius and Athanasius, or who heard missionaries in the rude forests of Germany, or who were attracted to Calvin at Geneva or fled from him, or who took sides in the religious wars of England or in the early religious struggles of America. Vicariously I feel a part of this epic, even of those scenes which I would repudiate. And I cannot understand how it is that anyone who accepts the theory that he has descended from animal ancestors should be unhappy because he has Christian ancestors also. Here is a matter about which I do feel some zeal: to communicate this sense of being a part of history.

As to the view that Christianity is a spirit which has come down through the ages, I find this supported by the saints I have known. Some have been ministers; some, laymen. Some have been highly educated; some, simple people. Some have been Unitarians, some Universalists, some Congregationalists, some Methodists, some Episcopalians, some Lutherans, some Christian Scientists, some Roman Catholics. There is a spirit which has come down to us through Christian channels. For this spirit I have reverence; towards it I have aspiration.

But this is not exclusively a Christian spirit. I close by quoting a non-Christian, Pandit Nehru. "The past is ever with us, and all that we are and that we have comes from the past. We are its products and we are immersed in it. Not to understand it and feel it as something living within us is not to understand the present. To combine it with the present and extend it to the future, to break from it where it cannot be united, to make all this the pulsating and vibrating materials for thought and action—that is life."

The Christmas Idyll

Amos B. Horlacher

Christmas involves a paradox; not merely for the theologian, but for the layman as well. How many editors, essayists and preachers approach this Feast of the Incarnation with "Nothing to write or preach about"? This is not surprising since nearly everything worth saying has been said and usually better than the named gentlemen could say it because they are rarely poets.

But the paradox is more apparent than real, for the truth is that the writer or speaker whose habitual mileau is prose is simply out beyond his depth when he is dealing with a subject that is suffused with poetic image and symbol. Whatever else Christmas may be, it is beyond all else the most perfect symbol the world has ever known, or is ever likely to know, for a whole structure of spiritual reality. This is admittedly a large statement and one that is unlikely to go unchallenged by several sorts of people: the purblind and grubbing literalist; the prosebound and fact-worshiping secularist; and the idealistic pan-religionist who will be inclined to see in this statement a sort of Christian chauvinism. To satisfy such as these, or at least to make an effort to meet their objections, "a decent respect" for their opinions may constitute an act not unworthy of the spirit of Christmas itself.

But we must begin at the beginning—with

language itself. It is now nearly twenty centuries after the first Christmas. No one now alive was an eye witness. Hence, our complete dependence on language to unlock the door of this knowledge. What we find in the treasure house, once we have this key, will greatly depend upon what language means to each one of us as we read the simple story. It is, of course, true that music and art, coming after the reading or telling, may supplement or vastly enrich the little we may learn by way of the written or spoken word; but this little is absolutely indispensible to all further knowing. Nor are we finished with difficulties when we have learned to read the simple story of Advent and the Incarnation or have heard it from another. Our medium of knowing is words, and these are but abstractions to denote concrete objects and actions. The word *table* is nothing other than a meaningless sound unless by prior covenant a group of people have agreed to have this sound represent in thought a certain concrete object identified by one or the other or a combination of the senses. A word then is a symbol; and all language is symbolic.

But there are degrees of symbolism. Again, the word *table* (admittedly symbolic however concrete the object it denotes) is far less symbolic to me, at least, than the word *king* or *angel* or *star!* Take, then, a cluster of such words of high symbolic force, use them to describe a circumstance or an event, at once wonderful and transcendently beautiful so that the burgeoning meanings "ray out from it like the corona around the sun" and you have the Christmas Idyll.

But it is necessary to be disciplined and precise in this matter of symbolism. Too often it is adduced to conceal thought rather than to reveal it. What then is its proper use? As a device of communication it is properly used when one seeks to convey thought or meaning when that thought or meaning outruns or overflows the widest denotation or even connotation of language as usually employed. There is, of course, another use of symbol as employed by the mathematician and scientists in which its purpose is to say no more or no less than what the symbol actually denotes. Theologians are fond of using symbols in this way, and this is why the language of theology is so utterly unsuitable for worship (or for preaching, for that matter). But this is a special case not germane to the subject at hand.

Perhaps an illustration will help. Some days ago in my classroom, we were discussing Leah Bodine Drake's interesting poem, "The Hellenic World," which appeared in the October issue of *The Atlantic Monthly.* In response to a question, one of my brighter students said, "The Greeks appear to have accepted the truth of old legends which had no truth in them."

"No truth?" I asked in a tone of challenge; "I would gather from what you have said that the *Medea* which you have presumably read for this assignment has no truth in it. Is this what you mean to say?"

Her rejoinder was instant and emphatic. "Oh, no! I didn't mean that. I meant only that most of their legends probably had no basis or truth in fact. There are some very large truths of a *different order* in the plays of Euripides."

And so there are—truths of a *different order* not only in Euripides but in the Gospels as well; and it is precisely this kind of truth that is meant when it is referred to as symbolic. And it is for such truth that all Christians (and all others who rejoice in God's grace) give thanks and sing when the time draws nigh in the cycle of the year when by long tradition and gracious custom we celebrate the birth of a sacred child on a silent and holy night.

But let us return once again to our beleagured editor, essayist and preacher who must write or say something "appropriate" for Christmas! If he must eschew symbol what hope has he of saying anything that is fresh or beautiful—or even adequate on a subject where there is so much—and so little to say? He may conclude quite rightly that everything worth saying has been said—and better said in the Gospels. But if he has learned to sing, the world for him will be full of the music of the Glory of God in the Highest.

Phillips Brooks, himself no apprentice in prose, knew this. I have read a number of his "Christmas sermons," but never was he more eloquent in speech or persuasive in word—or, indeed, more truthful—than when he lifted up his heart in song:

"How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is given;

So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his heaven."

Let the man who would know Christmas break out of his prison house of fact and prose, and give wings to his soul!

The Worcester Statement

The implications of the Syracuse conference have frankly disturbed many people in our parishes. It is impossible to deny our heritage and to desire to make such a denial is for many of us unintelligible. And what of our covenanted churches? Does not the faith expressed in our covenants bind us more irrevocably than any statement of purpose adopted by any assembly? And then there is the cherished freedom among Unitarians and Universalists which causes us to wonder. We have jealously guarded a man's right to deny what he could not believe and to be as radical as his conscience demanded him to be. Now we must ask if the freedom we cherish is an authentic freedom. Does it work both ways? Is a man free to affirm what in conscience he must believe?

A meeting of some two dozen ministers was held in Worcester on November 30. At the close of the meeting the following statement was released to the press.

We, ministers of Unitarian and Universalist churches, who have covenanted in the spirit of Jesus to worship God and serve our fellow men, in order to preserve our Christian consciences, to keep our prophetic fire, and to insure to our children the heritage of our native Christian language, thought and prayer, do join in common loyalty and mutual help. We do not separate ourselves from men of good will, and we respect and welcome the differences of heritage and of personal choice among ourselves and others. As we cherish liberty of conscience for all men, so do we insist upon our freedom to praise God according to our customs and to walk in the Christian way of neighborliness and peace. In the courage of our Christian concern we declare that we who seek to live the Christian life are now together, joined by the faith we have and which holds us as one. We invite Unitarians and Universalists of like mind to join us in this covenant and in the work to which we are called.

Theodore Popp	Grafton, Mass.
E. King Hempel	Dexter, Maine
Bradford E. Gale	Quincy, Mass.
Philip M. Larson	Chelmsford, Mass.
Carl Scovel	Sudbury, Mass.
Willard L. McKinstry	Leicester, Mass.
Charles C. Forman	Plymouth, Mass.
Paul Harmon Chapman	Greenfield, Mass.
Kenneth G. LaFleur	Northborough, Mass.
Harry H. Hoehler	Beverly, Mass.
William E. Billingham	Brookfield, Mass.
David B. Loomis	Winchendon, Mass.
Edwin A. Randle	Gardner, Mass.
Herbert F. Vetter, Jr.	Milton, Mass.
Stewart E. Hild	Franklin, New Hampshire
Carl Bihldorff	Brookline, Mass.
Edward P. Daniels	Boston, Mass.
Henry G. Cooper	Worcester, Mass.
Walter D. Kring	New York
Joseph Barth	Boston, Mass.
Virgil E. Murdock	Westford, Mass.
Wallace W. Robbins	Worcester, Mass.
David B. Parke	Peterborough, New Hampshire
Wallace Bush	Duxbury, Mass.
Charles E. Park	Boston, Mass.

Editorial

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for Christianity any exclusive claim such as an orthodox Christian must make by insisting that God has revealed himself *only* through Christianity. Conversely, no universal religionist would exclude Christian insights (although one who does not share their point of view is frequently amazed at the stronger appeal of the remote and unintelligible in religion as against that which is authentic to our own culture). Nevertheless emotions run deep in both camps and a mere intellectual understanding of the differences cannot give a true picture of the values at stake and the deeply significant principles involved. Universal religion is based on the highest and most commendable idealism one can imagine. If it cannot be defended intellectually, nor established as historically valid, nor psychologically well-grounded, it does not take away from the idealism and charm that draws many people to it. On the other hand the liberal Christians can never accept the charge that Christianity, *per se*, is divisive. They willingly affirm that God has revealed himself in many times and through

many traditions, but for us God is most perfectly revealed in the face of Jesus Christ. Many among us are first of all committed to Christianity and secondly to that kind of Christianity we call Unitarian. To feel forced to choose between two values, each precious in its own right, is to experience deep anguish of heart and spirit.

The final purposes of the proposed consolidated Unitarian Universalist Church probably made no one completely happy. The wide diversity that exists among us was reflected in the task that proved impossible, *viz.*, to state purposes that would be meaningful for all of us. Coupled with that manifest impossibility was the confusion of the Joint Merger Commission which on three occasions in as many days reversed its recommendation regarding the purposes. In the *Proposed Plan* dated August 1 the recommended statement was the following:

> To cherish and spread the universal truths taught by the great prophets and teachers of humanity in every age and tradition, immemorially summarized as love to God and love to man.

On October 28 the Commission substituted this amendment:

> To cherish and spread the universal truths taught by Jesus and the other great teachers of humanity in every age and tradition as love to God and love to man.

On the evening of October 29 the Merger Commission moved to drop its amendment and return to its first statement. After lengthy debate a substitute amendment was introduced on the floor which was debated, rejected, supported by the Merger Commission and finally adopted after amending *our* to *the*. Thus the controversial Article II, Section 2 as accepted reads:

> To cherish and spread the universal truths taught by the great prophets and teachers of humanity in every age and tradition, and immemorially summarized in the Judeo-Christian heritage as love to God and love to man.

So the matter stands. Between December and May our churches are invited to record themselves as favoring or rejecting the proposed plan for consolidation. The results of the plebiscite of the parishes will determine the final action of the two denominations in May when they meet in Boston. We must seek God's will as we face this question in the coming months. However the matter is resolved our covenanted churches go untouched by any action beyond that of the local parish. No individual or delegate body can tell us what our purposes shall be or shall not be. This we alone can determine. Many of our Churches are bound together by covenants that boldly and proudly affirm our place in the great universal Church whose head is Christ. As we look to the future we must pray God's help that we shall be worthy of our heritage and strong for this hour and steadfast in our Christian devotion as we seek "to walke in all our wayes, according to the rule of the gospel—& in all sincere conformity to His holy ordinances —& in mutual love to, and watchfulness over one another—depending whole & only upon the Lord our God to enable us by his grace hereunto."*

* These words are from the covenant of the First Church in Plymouth, Mass., gathered in 1620.

THE MIDST OF WINTER

"In the midst of winter, I finally discovered that there was in me an invincible summer."

—Albert Camus

"The still point of the turning world."

— T. S. Eliot, *Burnt Norton*

You have seen it on a thousand tinsel cards:
A little glow of light, contracted, and beyond,
A dark hill where a jackal howls.
Above, beside Orion and his sword
The dragon and the scorpion are bound
Upon the weary heavens' Ixion wheel;
But here at the hub there is no motion,
Only the still center where the spokes converge.

There are the archangels above the hill
Their faces all intent upon one spot
Here where the music of the spheres dies out,
Discord and chord resolve into one hush.

Walk on tiptoe; do not walk at all.

And we who have gold enough, but not to spare,
Who have forgotten in what land frankincense is found,
We still have myrrh; come with your myrrh
Where the world's longing gathers to one ache,
The hurt of things done and things that can never be done
(Yea, and a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also).

At this birth his first sound was a wail
And at the end there shall be bloody sweat
(That sword the linch-pin of the turning wheel);
But here between two cries an impossible hush
Falls, where into the glow we can come still,
Whisper, tiptoe, put down the myrrh;
Here in all the wheeling worlds we are at home.

December, 1958 Brooks Wright

The Church Outside The Church

(*Continued from page 4*)

where healthy doubt survives. The very negation of the skeptic is a defense against pretentious faith and religious intolerance. Nevertheless, just as democratic checks are not instruments of positive activity, so doubt is a citadel of free community which must be balanced by faith and commitment.

The church outside the church offers its important contribution, but that does not mean that it is without serious weaknesses and dangers. We must persistently ask the skeptic what he regards as supreme if not the God who is Reality, the God who is Love. Is his object of devotion to be the self, the nation, the state, or humanity? Then there is no ultimate meaning of life and no enduring basis for moral action. Such gods must perish as all idols perish.

Furthermore, the church outside the church is ever in danger of being religiously irrelevant. Skeptics who condemn all religion because in the past religion has been primarily authoritarian and supernatural overlook promising contemporary developments in religious thought and practice. They fall backwards into the trap of pure traditionalism, thinking only in terms of what has been, not what may be. All too often skeptics actually neglect to consider religion rationally, examining the various possible types of religious experience and orienting themselves in the light of those types which are most meaningful. The point is that no living, sane man can avoid having some effective orientation to ultimate, integral divine reality and of a consequent sense of comparative values. The skeptic is inevitably a religious man of some sort. Thus comes the question, "Is his explicit faith worth having?" That question he too rarely dares to ask.

Still the church outside the church does have its virtues. As a relativist, the skeptic eternally opposes competing authoritarianisms which do not allow for democratic compromise. For example, he will criticize both Communism and Catholicism insofar as they limit academic and civil liberties. Thus he plows fertile ground for free community. At the same time, insofar as he is humanitarian, he is both sympathetic to man's inner anxiety and diligent in advocating political action to provide security for the anxious. These are qualities within the church outside the church which appeal to hosts of sophisticated modern men. Some of us within the church will deplore these qualities as being part of a trend toward degrading secularization of our culture. Others, aware of serious weaknesses in the ranks of both skeptics and believers, will sense that in many instances *they who have gone out of the temple none the less carry within themselves the truth of Christ.*

• • • Introducing Our Contributors • • •

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